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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000469

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KING COVERS SYRIA, BORDER ISSUES, SECURITY  
TRAINING FOR IRAQIS WITH SEN. BILL NELSON

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

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SUMMARY  
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11. (S) King Abdullah told visiting Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) January 11 that increasingly sophisticated weapons continue to be smuggled across the Syrian border. He expressed concern over the security of his border with Saudi Arabia as well as Saudi stability, hoping that Saudi internal efforts against extremists were not too little, too late. The King expressed firm support for continued training of Iraqi military and police personnel in Jordan. Sen. Nelson visited the Iraqi training site. END SUMMARY.

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SYRIA A "PUZZLE"  
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12. (S) Sen. Bill Nelson briefed King Abdullah January 11 on his January 10 meeting in Damascus with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad, noting that Bashar had not in his conversation ruled out the possibility of discussions with Israel. The King responded that Bashar had recently told the British the same thing, and that "his heart is in the right place." However, the King continued, increasingly sophisticated weapons continue to be smuggled from Syria into Jordan, and Jordanian forces are "catching Syrians (doing the smuggling) for the first time." The King said he believes Bashar is in control in Damascus, but many of the people around him "profit from the status quo." They try to "keep him occupied with Israel so he (Bashar) won't think out of the box."

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"TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE" IN SAUDI ARABIA?  
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13. (S) After expressing appreciation for U.S. border control assistance to Jordan, the King mentioned his concerns about Jordan's border with Saudi Arabia. Sen. Nelson asked whether the Saudis are addressing their internal problems with extremists. The King responded that they are trying, but he was not sure they know how much they need to do: based on an assessment by the Jordanian security services, the Saudi security apparatus needs to be "rebuilt from the ground up." He hoped Saudi internal efforts to control extremism are not "too little, too late." "We cannot afford to lose Saudi Arabia, so we must all work together to help them." The King noted that, in their meeting January 10, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah had told him that Saudi Arabia would put down its internal unrest in 2004. While CP Abdullah was relaxed about the situation, the King commented, the members of the younger generation were "tense." The King worried about spillover into Jordan from Saudi Arabia if the internal situation got out of control.

14. (C) CP Abdullah had also argued to the King that now is the time to press for forward movement on the Middle East peace process. The King said that Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher was working with his Saudi and Egyptian counterparts on language for a forward leaning statement that could be issued at the Arab Summit meeting this spring.

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IRAQI MILITARY, POLICE TRAINING A PRIORITY  
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15. (C) The King noted that Jordan is committed to helping restore stability in Iraq, and said he was following closely Jordanian training of New Iraqi Army personnel. In the training, Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish soldiers are being mixed to create an Iraqi military esprit de corps. He also noted that Jordan is taking good care of the Iraqi military trainees, saying "we give them four times the rations of a Jordanian soldier."

16. (SBU) Following the meeting with the King, Sen. Nelson visited the Jordan International Police Training Center southeast of Amman. Jordanian Public Security Director (national police chief) Gen. Tahseen Shurdom, Training Director Steve Bennett, and camp commander (Jordanian police) Col. Hassan al-Nsour briefed Sen. Nelson on the program and conducted a tour of the facility which is quickly rising out

of the desert. Sen. Nelson observed the first group of Iraqi police recruits being trained in marksmanship, car search and driving techniques, and defensive and arrest tactics, as well as the in-processing of the second group of 500 recruits, which had arrived that day.

17. (U) Sen. Nelson has cleared this message.

18. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.

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GNEHM